

EXHIBIT NO.

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SB 159Don Johnston SB 159 Testimony

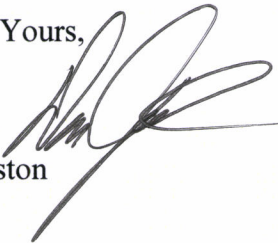
Hello, thank you for your presence today to hear my testimony. My name is Don Johnston. I am a current board member of the Brain Injury Alliance of Montana, I am also a brain injury survivor. I am here to stress the importance to pass SB 159.

It has only been three years since my accident. After 40 days in coma, I woke up with severe burns to 23% of my body as well as severe trauma to the head. I had to relearn how to walk, talk, cook, go shopping, and pay my bills— many of the everyday tasks we take for granted. During my recovery with brain injury, I realized that many other Montanans were going through the same hardships as I with recovering from a brain injury. I started a support group in Hamilton for those battling the same struggles as I.

With SB 159 changing “Opt-In” to “Opt-Out” it will allow for Montana support groups to have more opportunity to receive grants through a \$15,000 fund within the “Opt-Out” budget. Many support groups in Montana are on limited means but with grant opportunities from “Opt-Out” fund the money can be put towards transportation for survivors to and from support group meetings, or scholarships to attend the annual brain injury conference, which is held in a different Montana city each year (scholarship would pay for room, board, conference fee, and transportation).

As a support group leader in Montana and a brain injury survivor, I can see first-hand how limited resources are for individuals living with a brain injury. Often depression and isolation is an issue individuals have to deal with and I have found that getting involved with helping others has helped me overcome some of these issues, but this has required me using my own funds to do so. Wouldn't it be great if the state had the funds to help other leaders like myself help others conquer the common issues that come with a traumatic brain injury. This funding will help reach Montanans who suffer with this hidden scar that we cannot escape to help them live a quality of life that we all deserve as Montanans.

Sincerely Yours,



Don Johnston